

Lord's Prayer, the

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Jesus teaches this prayer to his disciples as a paradigm of proper prayer as he trains them for the missionary task of the messianic age that he is inaugurating in his own person as the incarnate Son of God and Son of man. The prayer needs to be seen in the larger contexts of the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel of Matthew. The shorter version in Luke 11:2-4 appears in a different setting; during Jesus' itinerant ministry he paraphrased important teachings in training his followers for prayer and mission. Both versions of the Lord's Prayer imply the importance of a vertical dimension of personal purity in worship of the Father as a prerequisite of valid missionary activity on the Lord's behalf.

A second requirement of successful mission is the horizontal bearing of fruit, as evidenced in Jesus' teaching that his true followers will be known by their fruits (Matt 7:15-20). Both vertical and horizontal dimensions are emphasized as a unit in the Sermon on the Mount, which summarizes the purpose of the Gospel of Matthew as a whole. The Gospel was likely written to serve as a manual for mission in the early church and was based on eyewitness accounts of Jesus' work and teaching. Matthew then would have been written within the nascent Jewish Christian mission originating in and emanating from Jerusalem, reflecting Jesus' exemplary training of the first line of missionaries with a view to serving as model for all his subsequent followers.

A study of the four Gospels affirms a recurrent pattern: Jesus as incarnate Son of God and Son of man models in action for his disciples what he teaches, since he embodies the ideal image of God in humanity. Where Adam failed he succeeds in his redemptive and exemplary work. Since God is the relational Trinity in everlasting and inexhaustible fellowship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the divine design and nature of created humanity are to reflect relatedness and fellowship both vertically and horizontally as the Old Testament Decalogue indicates, and this Jesus does to perfection. While his relation to the Father and the spirit is unique in view of his oneness and equality within the Triune Family, as incarnate Son he also exemplifies direct address, passionate intent and purity, unostentatious setting in prayer, and concern with the two dimensions of proper prayer honoring the Father vertically and asking for help in realizing the Father's will in the present mission horizontally. These two dimensions constitute the heart of the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer.

The immediate context of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 is the triple teaching of Jesus on alms (vv. 1-4), prayer (vv. 5-15), and fasting (vv. 16-18). In each Jesus warns against ostentatious hypocrisy and requires worship en to krypto ("in secret"). This has to do not so much with privacy and isolation ("Our Father" indicates communal prayer), but praying with pure intent for the honor of God in the world. When this proper attitude is fulfilled God rewards

Jesus instructs his disciples as to the priority and content of the prayer. For Jesus says, "This, then, is how you should pray." If used properly, especially the warning not to "keep on babbling like pagans" (Matt 6:7), prayer directed to God should function in two spheres. The first is directed vertically in glorification of the Father and accomplished on earth as in heaven. Where the first section of the prayer is: give us, forgive us, lead us. The priority is important, for without the first in place. Glorification of God must be given pride

the arrangement in the following sentence flow of verse:

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς,
(Our Father who art in heaven),

ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου,
(Let thy name be hallowed).

ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου,
(Let thy kingdom come),

γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου,
(Let thy will be done),

ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς.
(As in heaven so upon earth).

The opening line of the prayer is a declarative statement; it affirms that God is (implied), that he is in heaven (distant and sovereign), and that he is also our Father (near, familial, and personal). The three petitions follow with imperatives up front, emphasizing all three aspects of the Greek aorist tense: let the action begin (inceptive), let it continue (durative), let it be completed (terminal). The triplet indicates not so much the power of the petitioner to bring about what is petitioned, but agreement with the fact that God is already sovereignly bringing to pass all three petitions. In the person of Jesus the Son his name is being hallowed, his kingdom is now coming, his will is in process of being done on earth as it is in heaven.

All three petitions are to be understood in light of inaugurated eschatology that Jesus embodies in his own words and work and will bring to completion at his second coming. The three petitions accordingly are "joining" petitions in the sense that Jesus is asking his followers to join him in what already are the sovereign realities and doings of the Father through the Son. In praying the disciples are in effect serving notice that they want to be part of this great, ongoing, glorifying ministry, desiring that all humankind will come to honor God as he deserves to be honored. Hence the petitions acknowledge the already and not yet aspects of Jesus' ministry and the disciples' desire to participate in the mission of realizing on earth what is enjoyed in heaven.

The second unit in the prayer comprises three parallel "us" petitions that request divine help in the mission to which Jesus' followers are being called: "give us"; "forgive us"; "deliver us." These correspond on the human side to the three petitions in the first unit, which focus on God. As the Father's name is to be hallowed, so the disciples ask to be honored with spiritual and material sustenance because they bear the image of God and reflect his glory, especially now that they are experiencing the redeeming work of Jesus the Son of God in their lives and are engaged in sharing the good news of salvation in the mission of fruitbearing.

The key here is "not too much, not too little, but just enough, " as with God's supply of manna in the morning and quail in the evening for Israel during the wilderness mission just enough for the day, no more (Exodus 16:4 Exodus 16:12-21). Hence epiousion is best translated "what is sufficient" "Give us food sufficient for the day, " remembering that the setting of the Gospel of Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Lord's Prayer (in Luke as well) is one of eschatological urgency and preparation for mission in the new exodus inaugurated by Jesus, and of traveling light; it is not a general prayer for common grace. There was no ordinariness for Israel in the wilderness, nor is there for God's people in the new mission. As with Israel, Jesus' disciples are to acknowledge the honor of being called to represent God's image in the world, to conquer enemy-held territory in his name, and to exhibit faith in the Lord that he will provide daily sustenance for their extraordinary eschatological journey.

The second petition in the "us" section parallels the second petition in the "Father" section. How does "your kingdom come"? It comes by the Father's bringing forgiveness through the redemptive work of Jesus the Son, who personifies the redeeming reign of God. Accordingly, the kingdom comes as sinners ask forgiveness of the Lord by acknowledging moral and spiritual obligations, receive saving grace by faith, and then pass along the good news of Jesus to others with a forgiving heart. The petition is not conditional; sinners are not forgiven because they forgive others. They are saved by grace through the redemptive work of Jesus alone. But they have no right to claim forgiveness for themselves if they are unwilling to forgive others, for that would undermine the purpose of the disciples' mission: as they have been forgiven by God's grace in Jesus the Son, so they are to share the message of forgiveness with the world.

The mission of proclamation to which the disciples of Jesus are called leads to the third "us" petition, which corresponds to the third "Father" petition. How shall "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"? It is done by proclaiming the work of reconciliation Jesus came to accomplish and so binding the devil and plundering his goods (Matt 12:28-30 ; Luke 11:20-23). Jesus defeated the tempter by successfully passing the probation of testing (Matt 4:1-11), and hence proved worthy as his disciples' savior and exemplar. Thus the third petition is best understood if it focuses on the prayer "deliver us from the evil one," taking the clause "and lead us not into temptation" as explanatory of what is involved in the petition: protection from the adversary who would keep us from salvation and from sharing it with others. This is essentially the prayer Jesus prays in Gethsemane (Matt 26:39 ; 4:7) as he resists the temptation not to drink the cup of redemptive suffering, thus again foiling the devil who is seeking to divert the image-keeper from his redemptive role.

With the exception of the petition for forgiveness of sins (Jesus is the sinbearer who provides forgiveness), the eschatological themes of the Lord's Prayer would have been prayed by Jesus throughout his ministry; they are thus fitting for his followers, who are given the honor and responsibility of sharing in his mission by proclaiming the coming of the kingdom and doing the will of God, to his glory.

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See also Jesus Christ; Prayer

Bibliography. W. Barclay, *The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer for Everyman*; A. W. Pink, *The Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer*.

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